

THE TIMES-DISPATCH

DAILY—WEEKLY—SUNDAY

Business Office 216 E. Main Street.
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BY MAIL. One Six Three Cts.
POSTAGE PAID. Year. Mo. Mo. Mo.
Daily with Sunday. \$6.00 \$1.50 \$1.50
Daily without Sunday. 4.00 2.00 1.00
Sunday only. 2.00 1.00 .50
Weekly (Wednesday) 1.00 .25 .25

By Times-Dispatch Carrier Delivery Service in Richmond (and suburbs), Manchester, and Petersburg.

One Year. One Year.
Daily with Sunday. 14 cents \$4.50
Daily without Sunday. 10 cents 4.50
Sunday only. 6 cents 2.50
(Yearly subscriptions payable in advance.)

Entered, January 27, 1903, at Richmond, Va., as second-class matter, under act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

HOW TO CALL TIMES-DISPATCH

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 1907.

There are some faults so nearly allied to excellence that we can scarce weed out the vice without eradicating the virtue.—Goldsmith.

Municipal Operation.

The City Hall just now presents an instructive object-lesson in municipal operation. The janitor service costs the city about \$9,000 a year, and the Mayor and at least one member of the Council have declared that the service is very poor. We are informed, too, that the janitors do not wash all the windows of the building, some of that work being done by an outside concern.

In yesterday's paper we gave notice that a responsible man, who makes a business of cleaning large buildings, stood ready to enter into contract with the Council to clean the City Hall and furnish brooms, brushes and toilet articles for the lump sum of \$5,500 a year.

Yet, in the face of these conditions, the janitors of the City Hall ask that their pay be raised from \$50 to \$55 dollars a month, and the Council gives the petition serious consideration.

Upon what ground is this request made? Is the work harder, and is the service more efficient than that performed by other janitors? Can these janitors cite the Council to any janitor privately employed who receives as much as \$50 a month? What is the market price of janitor labor in Richmond? The Times-Dispatch is willing that every employee of the city shall receive the market price for his work, whatever it may be. But there is no sufficient reason why the city should pay more. Nor has the Council the moral right to pay more.

Our City Hall is one of the finest buildings of the kind in the United States, and it should be kept in prime condition. It should be a model of neatness. It should be an example for the whole city. It should be kept so tidy as to make a favorable impression upon visitors. But it is kept in such condition? Is it kept as well as the service more efficient than that performed by other janitors? Can these janitors cite the Council to any janitor privately employed who receives as much as \$50 a month? What is the market price of janitor labor in Richmond? The Times-Dispatch is willing that every employee of the city shall receive the market price for his work, whatever it may be. But there is no sufficient reason why the city should pay more. Nor has the Council the moral right to pay more.

It is plain on the face of it that we are paying more than the work is worth, and getting an inferior service. We are paying more for janitors than private concerns are paying, and we are paying in bulk \$9,000 for a work which a private contractor offers to perform for \$5,500 and furnish incidental supplies. It may be that some of the janitors do other work than that of actual cleaning. But, making due allowance for that, we are paying far more than we should pay.

It is a small matter in itself, but a principle is no trifle. Municipal operation is almost invariably more expensive than private operation, for the reason that it is done by the rule of politics rather than by the rule of business. Richmond should reduce all her municipal operations to business rules. The way to do it is to commit the business affairs of the city to a board of control, composed of practical men. The sooner we do this, the sooner will the tax-payers get value received.

Sunday Observance.

The Massachusetts Legislature has appointed a special committee to draw up a bill for the regulation of Sunday observance. One point, at least, has already been settled, and that is that the Sunday law is no longer, as of old, in New England a religious regulation. The committee has agreed that a weekly day of rest is needed "for the preservation of the health and strength of the community."

The majority report, says the Boston Transcript, "is characterized by a full and frank recognition of the change in the character of the day as the basis of legislation. The research made by the committee convinced six of its seven members that the tendency throughout the State is towards sanctioning such forms of outdoor recreation on Sunday as are not disturbing to public worship or to the public peace, and do not trespass upon public rights, and assuming that this is public sentiment, they deem that the legal barriers to reasonable and innocent pastimes should be removed. Gunning or any noisy form of field sports they would not exempt, but fishing, as not

disturbing, they would remove from the prohibition of the law. On Sunday amusements the six members divide, and there are two reports—three members favoring sharp restriction as to the character of entertainments by legislation, while three others believe that the local authorities should be invested with licensing power, accompanied by control and supervision of the character of all shows, concerts, etc."

It is a difficult matter to get some persons to understand that Sunday in law is not the "Lord's Day," as the churches observe it. The Sunday law, as we have before remarked, is not a legalization of the Fourth Commandment.

The law does not require any man to keep the day holy, for that would be an infringement of religious liberty. The civil statute simply provides that Sunday shall be observed as a day of rest, and that no labor shall be performed, except household work or other work of necessity, or of charity.

But there are no restrictions on amusements except so far as they may disturb public worship or the general peace and quiet of the day. Hunting on Sunday is prohibited, because that may disturb the rest of others, but not fishing with hook and line.

The civil law cannot make men and women observe Sunday as a holy day. That is a matter for the church to deal with.

The Torrens System.

To-day we publish an article from Mr. E. C. Massie, in which he discusses objections Nos. 2 and 3 to the Torrens system. Mr. Massie says:

"Lawyers and others of the old school object to the Torrens system because it will make the transfer of real estate easy. It is already easy enough," says one, "and as easy as the best interests of the people require." But when you go to transfer any real estate you find that it not only involves many difficulties, but is also tedious and costly. In the first place, no transfer can be made without the advice of a lawyer. No prudent man will buy without having the title examined. It makes no difference how often it has been examined before, it must be examined again by his lawyer for the purchase price, and the value of your title to the purchaser depends upon the opinion of his lawyer. The best lawyer in town may have assured you it was all right, but the purchaser will only be satisfied with the opinion of his lawyer. The purchaser's lawyer may not compare with yours in ability and experience, but his opinion is final so far as the purchaser is concerned. In other words, the value of any man's title may be made to depend upon the opinion of a weakling or a fledgling of the law. Can it be soberly said that transfers of real estate under these conditions are as easy as the best interests of the people require? Why should the people be compelled to consult a lawyer before any transfer of real estate can be made? And why should they be continually subjected to endless fees for examinations of titles that have already been examined and re-examined ad nauseam? This is a perpetual tax levied on generation after generation of long-suffering victims, not from necessity, but because they supply permit themselves to be so taxed and gouged. No man can deny that this tax and the delays and difficulties attending every transfer of land operate as a restraint upon transfers. But Mr. Blackstone says: 'Experience hath shown that property best answers the purposes of civil life, especially in commercial countries, when its transfer and circulation are totally free and untrammelled.' And the late John B. Minor, that great doctor of laws and wise teacher, said: 'Experience has demonstrated the prosperity of a community depends much upon the freedom with which property may be transferred from hand to hand. Any obstructions to such transfer are therefore hindrances to the general well-being.' One great purpose of the Torrens system is to remove all such obstructions and hindrances."

"Another favorite objection to the Torrens system, made by persons who do not understand it, is that it will endanger the homes of the people. This is an argument that has been used with superior force not only in the Legislature, but on the streets—and it has even been repeated by lawyers who ought to know better. A man may come to town with his certificate of title in his pocket, and in a drunken spree dissipate the savings of a life-time and deprive his helpless wife and children and his innocent children of their home. In point of fact no such thing would be as much possible under the Torrens system as it is now. In order to transfer a title under the Torrens system, a deed has to be signed, witnessed and delivered at present, and if there is a wife, she has to sign and acknowledge the deed along with the husband to pass her dower, as at present. And in order to pass a Torrens title, both the owner's certificate of title and the deed must be presented together to the clerk when a transfer is desired. In this respect it is more difficult to pass title under the Torrens system than at present, because now only a deed is necessary. The Torrens system throws an additional safeguard around the transfer by requiring the presentation of the owner's certificate in addition to his deed. But it simplifies the transaction by making every transfer final, thereby cutting out the necessity for any examination of title, and saving other costs to the parties, and bringing the business to a certain and speedy conclusion. A true statement of the case would, therefore be this:

"Suppose, if you please, that a man may be persuaded, inconsiderately, whether from haste or some malign influence, to deed away his home. If this be done under the present system, the deed may be recorded and his property be lost before he has time for reflection; but if it be done under the Torrens system, being compelled to deposit his certificate of title along with his deed, he will thus be given time for reflection while producing his certificate of title for deposit. It is apparent, then, that the Torrens system, so far from endangering the homes of the people, will throw an extra safeguard around them."

Former Senator Burton seems to have realized at last that the country requires nothing of him but nonsense."

The Chattanoga Times is authority for the statement that John Wesley Gaines wears a No. 8 hat. It is understood, however, that this is quite a snug fit.

Mr. W. T. Stead says that it has been his pleasure to "see three kings and two queens." The hope is freely expressed that he saw them with a royal flush.

The latest thing that the world has on Hoboken, N. J., is that its residents that possibilities attracted Ex-Senator Addicks.

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The moment seems to have arrived when John Temple Graves should be kindly but firmly gathered in by his loving friends.

Ex-Senator Addicks is being sued by his landlady for an unpaid gas bill. The mills of the gods maintain their ancient reputation.

Chancellor Day says that a bad cigar cured him of smoking. Thus, in one way or another, Pittsburg keeps constantly in the limelight.

The general public will watch with interest to see who will be the Abu Ruef of Mexico's earthquake.

Ex-Engineer Stevens says that the canal will be done in 1915. Eastern time, Mr. Stevens?

"No one can drive the President," says Jacob Idls. You can't even put him, can you, Mr. Rila?

But, fortunately, when a peach crop is killed, it doesn't necessarily stay killed.

At this stage of the game, it is pleasantly apparent that Richmond has, in fact, a Team.

Speaker Cannon has declared for Fairbanks. This makes two.

Something or other is still lingering in the lap of spring.

Rhymes for To-Day

The Railroad's Monody.

'T WAS just a railroad, poor and thin,
That passed along in my way:
And nothing plying in my eye,
It steamed right up and stopped close by.
And raised this mournful lay:

"I once was rich and prosperous,
With money on my clove;
A happy home, strong friends had I,
And whither else great wealth could buy—
And now Observe my woe!

"Property has gone—the case
Is different as can be;
I'm friendless, out-of-luck and poor,
I'm buffeted from door to door,
And no one cares for me.

"I take my downfall from the day
I took away the public's share;
For since then they who make the laws
Have stayed for neither rhyme nor cause,
To up and give me sass.

"They sting me for a two-cent rate,
They penalize for much;
They pinch away my profits—Whew!
Whatever thing I don't or do,
It means another touch.

"Till now I'm on my uppers, friend—
I'm destitute, you see;
I'm shabby, knocked about and frayed,
I've gone clean broke, and I'm afraid
The Workhouse looms for me."

The railroad paused and wiped a tear.
Quoth I: "Luck turns again;
When you stop paying dividends,
And cut your pay-roll down, your friends—
Ah, well, you'll find them then."

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MEREPLY JOKING.

The Laird: "Well, Donald, I met the pastor in London. He seems to be benefiting by the change."

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His letter he signed, and a campaign is coming along all right, and he expresses the opinion that he will win. He has several competitors, chief among them are Dr. J. L. Lindsay and Mr. Allen Perkins, a young lawyer, both of Charlottesville.

R. E. Griffith, of Winchester, is at Murphy's.

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The whole discussion of the federation question, now in progress, illustrates the world-old conflict between conservatism and liberalism, each of which, as they are always used to do, and each apparently unable to recognize the function of the other in human progress. Wherever the mind is free, and where a long-drawn-out debate on the subject which recently filled the leading organs of religious weekly, I was struck with the half-veiled logic, the sarcasm, the delectable, the gratuitous imputations and even the ordinary tactics of professional politics, which I learned from the two schools employ in the discussion of a topic that ought to be lifted to a very much higher philosophical plane. One would imagine that each party expected that the world would either be set forward or set back by the decision of a congress of preachers.

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As the church, as such, has less influence in the world, the truth, which is yet considered to be the divinely-ordained conveyor of moral influence, has been before, and will be, by its own testimony to the origin and nature of that truth. The church survives because the truth grows within it, and which it so often interprets as a charter of party, and so greatly obscures by its antiquated dogmatism, its never-endingly growing and fundamentally essential to human happiness and human progress.

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We believe that the people have become so disgusted with these illegal acts of this corporation, and with the want of shame which it displays, together with its insolent bearing towards the public, that public sentiment will demand that heavy fines be inflicted.—Harrisburg Times.

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Civic Improvement.
The town of Buchanan has been undergoing a great many improvements recently, and the people are very much pleased. At least we hope they are not with the advancement made. Convenience and comfort are a great advertisement for a small town, and when it is deficient in this respect, its progress is somewhat retarded.—Buchanan News.

Wise Smith.
Smith, Brown and Jones went to dine with Robinson the other night. On the way Smith said to his companions, "Oh, I am, beware of our host's wine."

As the result of this hint Brown and Jones took no wine, but they were surprised to see Smith drinking freely. On the way home they said to him, "What was the matter with Robinson's wine that you advised us not to take any?"

"Nothing the matter with the quality," said Smith coolly. "But I knew from experience that the quantity would be rather deficient—not enough to go round us all."—Sphere.

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